

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

OF

POPULAR

LITERATURE, SCIENCE, AND ART

Fifth Series

ESTABLISHED BY WILLIAM AND ROBERT CHAMBERS, 1832

CONDUCTED BY R. CHAMBERS (SECUNDUS)

No. 176.—VOL. IV.

SATURDAY, MAY 14, 1887.

PRICE 1½d.

BY THE SOUND OF MULL

ABOUT an hour and a half's sail from Oban is the little village of Lochaline, in the district of Morven, by the Sound of Mull. During the summer months, Lochaline is honoured every week-day by the calls of sundry steamers, and an occasional commercial traveller finds himself benighted there on his way to more important localities; but Lochaline is as unvisited of the ordinary tourist as St Kilda itself. Yet, in the matter of scenery, one might certainly travel much farther and fare much worse. Moreover, with the exception of Iona, there is no district in the west of Scotland about which history and legend have more to say than the coasts of Morven. Authorities will have it that this is not the genuine 'woody Morven' of Ossian. The district, at all events, is lucky in its name; and the reader of Ossian need look for no fitter scenes than the shores of the Sound of Mull to associate with Fingal and his heroes. Finally, these shores have had the supreme good fortune of stirring the enthusiasm of two of Scotland's greatest men of letters—Sir Walter Scott and Professor Wilson. It is perhaps to be regretted that Dr Johnson in his visit to the Hebrides did not set foot in Morven, since his visit to any spot in these regions seems always to lend it its crowning interest. And, in truth, his apparition in the Western Islands is one of the most singular events in their checkered enough history. The whole enterprise was so strangely at odds with all his known habits and prepossessions, that it strikes us rather as the imaginary voyages of Gulliver and Astolpho than even the most romantic adventures of the ordinary traveller.

Lochaline is the most important place in Morven; but how much this means will be understood when it is said that in the whole of Morven there are but four schools, with an average attendance of some fifteen pupils. Nowhere can be more distinctly marked than in Morven the complete change that has taken place in the social condition of the Highlands

during the present century. Twenty years ago, the coasts of Morven and Mull were thickly sown with crofts; at present, hardly one is to be seen on either shore. The result is that the present population of Morven is not a third of what it was at the beginning of the century. It is curious to hear the different opinions of the various classes of the country as to this changed state of things. To listen to the older representatives of the crofters, you would fancy that half a century ago Morven was a land flowing with milk and honey, where men lived as easily as the grass by the roadside. On the other hand, their younger descendants are equally positive that a man with his eighteen shillings a week is in an infinitely better way than the average crofter could possibly have been.

The strife of tongues in Morven is at its deadliest. But the Gaelic is dying fast; and there are few even of the oldest inhabitants who 'have not the English,' though with some intricacy of idiom. 'Dr M'Leod,' said an old crofter to us one day—'Dr M'Leod was speaking many languages, and he was saying from the pulpit that there was no language in which they praised the Lord so sweet as in the Gaelic.' The strife of interest and sentiment in the breast of the Highlander with regard to his native language is sometimes oddly enough illustrated when he is taken off his guard. If he be the father of a family of sons, he may be convinced in the abstract that Gaelic is the finest and oldest language in the world, and should therefore be the language of the British empire. But in his own practice he meekly yields to the stress of circumstance, and ignores his mother-tongue in his own household.

When Wordsworth visited these parts, he seems to have been much shocked by the sinister suggestions of many of the local names. But Lochaline is a happy exception. According to some authorities, it means 'the loch of the sun;' according to others, 'the beautiful or charming loch.' And, indeed, a more delightful sheet of water than Lochaline at full tide one need never

wish to see. Its great charm is in its happy union of the attractions of the fresh and the salt water loch. By its contracted opening and its well-fringed shores, it has something of the snugness and peace of the former; and the sparkling life and depth of colour of its waters tell unmistakably its kinship with the ocean. And to crown its graces, it abounds with fish.

The interior of Morven is simply a wilderness of heather-clad hills, not one of which has any pretensions to dignity or impressiveness. For the ordinary visitor, therefore, the interest of the country is strictly limited to the coast. The most impressive sight to be seen from Lochaline and its neighbourhood is the island of Mull. Just at this point, Mull presents a broad ridge, extending for several miles parallel with its seaboard. The height of this ridge is not great, yet quite sufficiently so to make it a somewhat dubious neighbour to the inhabitants of Morven; for if, on the one hand, with its kindred hills, it forms a mighty bulwark against the violence of the Atlantic; on the other, it seems as if all the clouds of heaven were as irresistibly attracted to this particular ridge as moths to a candle. In the brightest summer days, a tiny fleck will suddenly float in the most innocent manner over one particular corner, which the visitor is not long in identifying as the most hateful point in his horizon. In a few minutes, this innocent-looking fleck will have become the shroud of the entire Mull coast; and in ten minutes more, the rain will be falling in torrents on 'streamy' Morven.

Nevertheless, not even the memory of numberless unexpected duckings, and the collapse of the best-laid plans, can close the eyes to the extreme beauty of this sinister ridge. To the casual voyager through the Sound of Mull, these hills are apt to seem noteworthy neither by their contour nor elevation. To the loungeur on the opposite shore, however, these hills of Mull present a veritable *tableau vivant*. Their aspect is never the same for two hours together. In cloudless moments—rare, indeed, at all times of the year—the shadows of their own inequalities are seen with curious distinctness against the general glossy brown of their surface, and in this phase, the blue sky above and the sparkling waters of the Sound below gloriously contrast with the dark centre-piece of the picture. But it is on a bright, breezy day, when clouds are moving freely about the heaven, that these hills wear their best looks. They are then only to be compared to the screen in a magic-lantern illustration; for the play of lights and shadows along their slopes is then fairly endless in its life and variety. Seen from the Morven coast, these sombre hills of Mull then take on a positively cheerful expression, which goes far to reconcile us even with their malign interferences with the weather. But if at times they are capable of an amiable expression, they will also on occasion put on a frown that is truly diabolic. This frown is at its fiercest on summer evenings just before sunset, when, amid the general brightness of all the world besides, a legion of clouds will suddenly muster without the faintest warning of their intention. These clouds will then steal slowly down the slopes, gathering an intenser frown as they descend, till about

half-way to the sea. At this moment, cloud and hill together form one concentrated scowl, which cannot fail to suggest the curious fancy in the Ossianic poems, that the clouds are the homes of ghosts, who give expression to their various moods by the changing forms and hues of these easy vestures.

The Sound of Mull itself is seldom without some object that may serve to interest an idle man. From the point of view of which we are speaking, it might itself pass very well in quiet weather for an inland loch; but when the wind is up, you can have little doubt of its true character, as the very straitness and length of its passage would seem to intensify the disturbance of its waters. During our stay, we found an object of lively interest in the doings of a whale that took up his abode in the Sound for several weeks. It is not often, we believe, that one of such a size finds its way to these waters, as was sufficiently proved, indeed, by the general interest taken in his movements. He must have been between thirty and forty feet long; and his blowing was heard quite distinctly when he was close by the opposite shore—at a distance, that is to say, of about three miles. He made his appearance invariably between twelve and one o'clock; and during his period of activity, the Sound was in such a lively state of commotion, that one could see he was the cause of universal excitement. His appearance was always heralded by a shoal of mackerel, desperately floundering on the surface of the water. But these unfortunate fish found themselves literally between the devil and the deep sea. For if one chance gull happened to be at hand when they appeared, in a moment, from every point of the compass, a legion of gulls would muster; and then a butchery would ensue amid a yelling and screeching that made day hideous. In a few moments after the disappearance of the mackerel, the whale would emerge with a blast that silenced every sound beside. After a quick succession of reappearances, each attended by the same tremendous shout, though with diminished volume at each emergence, there would be silence for the space of half an hour; and then, in another part of the Sound, the same drama would be enacted. For a full month, these doings went on daily before our eyes. As the shores of the Sound of Mull are very steep, he could, in spite of his vast bulk, come quite close to the land with perfect safety. On one occasion, indeed, he came within less than ten yards of us. As a rule, the gulls took exceeding care to give their benefactor a wide berth; but once, while they were in their usual frenzy over a shoal of mackerel, we saw him bob up fairly in the midst of them, and then such a screaming arose as must have given him some curious ideas as to the inhabitants of this upper world.

While on the subject of natural history, it may be worth while to mention an instance we saw of the voracity of the seagull. Walking on Lochaline pier one day, one of us saw a large gull suddenly swoop on the railing of the pier, and then make off with some object in his maw. It was a large rat, which the piermaster had placed there that morning! But the story should be capped by what the piermaster told us of the rat itself. He had found it that morning

in his henhouse, evidently killed by a weasel, which had come upon him there, probably on a similar errand with himself. Upon examination, the rat was found to be in a condition that put him at sad odds with his formidable enemy. Of his natural four legs, he had but the off hind one remaining; and round his neck he carried a piece of netting, clearly the memorial of another and distinct adventure. Truly, as the piermaster remarked, this rat might have told a strange story. But he had evidently been doomed to an unusual fate. It was not enough that in his lifetime he should lose three legs and run the risk of hanging. In his death, he had to be borne to mid-heaven in the maw of a seagull.

Still on the same subject, I may mention an interview I myself had, which is but seldom enjoyed. I had one day lain down on the rocks for about half an hour, and, as the sun was hot, I had put up my umbrella. Suddenly looking from under it, I saw two eyes gazing at me with the serious intentness of a man of science examining a new specimen. The eyes were not four yards from me; and it would be difficult to say which of us eyed the other with the greater bewilderment. To tell the very truth, the eyes fixed on me had such an expression of mild intelligence, that for some moments I was in doubt whether we might not pass some civilities. After a full minute's mutual scrutiny, an unlucky movement of my umbrella put a sudden end to our interview, for the head abruptly bobbed, and I saw it no more. I then knew who had been making these approaches. It was a seal, which, from the distance, had doubtless mistaken my umbrella for a companion sunning himself on the rocks.

RICHARD CABLE,

THE LIGHTSHIPMAN.

CHAPTER XX.—THE FLOWERING OF FORGIVENESS.

JOSEPHINE was still before the fire in the cottage, when Richard Cable returned. He came in quietly. Though a solidly built man, he walked lightly, and his step as he entered the kitchen was so little audible that Josephine did not hear it. She was busied in her own thoughts.

But Mrs Cable saw and heard her son, and at once perceived that something had happened. 'What is it?' she asked; but Richard, instead of answering her, went to the fireplace, took Josephine by the hand, and raised her.

'Look at me, miss,' he said. 'You have given me a right to exercise some sort of authority over you, for you have thrown yourself on my protection and chosen me as your adviser. I give you my opinion now, and tell you what I wish you to do, what I am sure you ought to do.'

She looked steadily into his face. He was very grave, even pale. She also saw that something had happened.

'There has been an accident at the Hall. You must return to it at once.'

Her lips began to move in protest, and a flicker came into her eyes of reviving opposition.

'Listen to me, Miss Josephine. I would not advise this unless I were sure it was right. It is right all round—right for yourself, right for your father, right for your poor cousin, right for me.'

'My cousin?'

'There has been an accident. When I came to the garden gate, I found it unhasped, and'—

'Yes; I came out that way, and may not have fastened it behind me.'

'And as I heard your father's voice close by, I opened the gate and went in. I did not wish to see him in the house; I preferred meeting him in the garden.'

'I can understand that,' said Josephine.—'Was he alone?'

'No; he was on that raised place at the bottom of the garden, once used, they say, for winnowing corn.'

'Yes, the Platt.'

'He was there with Mr Gotham.'

Mrs Cable drew near, a great fear rising in her heart.

'I came up the steps. I do not quite know what happened. It seemed to me there was an altercation going on; but I cannot say. I came in quickly through the gate and up the steps, and did not listen to what they were saying, nor see them till I was right on them. Mr Cornellis was leaning forward with his hand toward Mr Gotham, who stood inwards, so to speak, with his back to the garden, where there is no wall; and I cannot say how it came about, whether he was surprised at my sudden appearance, or whether he lost his balance stepping back from Mr Cornellis. I say, I cannot tell how it came about, but he fell backwards off the Platt, headlong into the garden.'

Bessie Cable uttered a cry, and stood with her eyes distended with terror, looking at her son, her hands clenched, her arms stiff, stretched out at her sides.

'Mr Cornellis and I ran down to his aid at once. I raised him in my arms. He was not conscious. I sent your father to the house, and when help came, he was removed to his bedroom, and the doctor sent for.'

'Cousin Gabriel!' exclaimed Josephine, the tears rising in her eyes. 'O poor Cousin Gabriel!—What did the doctor say?'

'I did not wait to hear.'

'Is he—very seriously hurt?'

'I fear so. He did not speak. The gardener has pots and other things in the corner where he fell, and I am afraid he struck his head on some hard substance. He was not conscious. He did not know that he was being moved, and I suspect his spine is also injured.'

'You think he will die!' cried Josephine in terror. She had not realised at first the seriousness of the accident.

'I do not doubt it.'

Josephine stood in hesitation. She put her knuckles to her lips. 'What am I to do? What ought I to do?'

'I have told you,' said Richard Cable. 'You must go to the Hall.'

Then Mrs Cable closed her strong hand about Josephine's wrist; she did not speak, but she drew her with her. She did not wait to put anything over her head; she went forth as she

was, and Josephine unresistingly went with her.

The house was in commotion. Aunt Judith was useless. She had retired to her own room and rang for sherry, as she felt faint. The servants had lost their heads, and were ordering each other about to do impossible or useless things. No one attended to Miss Judith's bell, which rang violently every few minutes.

Mrs Cable and Josephine entered unnoticed, and proceeded at once to the room where the unfortunate man lay. As they entered, Mr Cornelius who was there, started. He had been overhauling Gotham's *secrétaire*. He knew the will was there; but he wished to satisfy himself that it had not been destroyed. It was there, with the date on the envelope when it was made.

Gabriel Gotham had not been undressed; he lay on the bed just as he had been placed there, and his condition remained unaltered. His eyes were dull, like those of a man drunk with sleep, and his breathing was stertorous. There was certainly pressure on the brain. The pillow was stained with blood that flowed from a wound in the back of his head.

Mr Cornelius took no notice of his daughter. He had not the smallest suspicion that she had attempted her life, and been saved by Cable. He looked hard at her dress—she was in a gown of Mrs Cable's, that did not fit her—but he asked no question. He supposed his daughter had been playing some new vagary, which did not greatly concern him, and about which he need not inquire. He said to Bessie Cable: 'Your son startled Mr Gotham. He came in on him unexpectedly. Why Mr Gotham should have been so surprised by seeing him, I cannot tell; he sprang back as if he had seen a ghost, and though I put out my hand to save him, I was too late: he fell off the windstrew, and I fear has met with a fatal injury.—What do you want?' This was addressed to a servant-girl who hovered at the bedroom door with a frightened face.

'Please, sir,' said the girl, 'do you know where the key of the cellarette is? Miss Cornelius seed the master being took up-stairs, and it has upset her so bad that she wants some sherry, and we don't know where the key is.'

'It is in your master's pocket,' said Mr Cornelius. 'She must wait till it can be taken from him—till he is undressed.'

Steps were heard on the stairs. The surgeon had come.

'I have not ventured to have him touched till you could see him,' said Mr Cornelius to the medical man. 'Poor fellow! poor fellow!' He was agitated; his voice shook, he turned his face away that his emotion might not be seen. 'The whole thing was done so suddenly. It is a fearful shock to us all.' Then he repeated the account of how Gabriel fell, as he had given it to Bessie, only adding, whilst his eye was fixed on her: 'Why he started was no doubt this—he was astonished at the intrusion. My cousin was very tenacious of his privacy. How the man got in, I do not know.'

'By the gate,' said Josephine. 'I left it open.'

'Or what he wanted, I cannot conjecture,' added Mr Cornelius.

'I cannot examine him till he is undressed,' said the surgeon. 'We must have a nurse.'

'I am here,' said Bessie. 'Let Mr and Miss Cornelius leave the room.'

The ex-missionary hesitated a moment, and then complied. As he went through the door, he saw the maid again, who asked: 'Please, sir, have you got the key?'

'Key. What key?'

'Please, sir, Miss Cornelius has the hysterics for want of sherry. There goes her bell again.'

'Bother her sherry!—Stand out of the way.'

Half an hour later, Mr Cornelius was summoned.

The surgeon was a plain blunt man. 'I've overhauled him,' he said. 'It is of no use giving you false hopes. He can live only a few hours.'

Mr Cornelius nodded; he was sure of this before the doctor came.

'Can you stay?' he asked.

'I will call again later. I can do no good. If I could, I would stay.—Let Mrs Cable remain with him; he must not be left alone.' Then he gave a few perfunctory directions and departed.

Cornelius looked at Bessie Cable with a sarcastic smile: 'Too late, my good woman.'

'Too late for what?' she asked, turning slowly, haughtily towards him. Poor and ignorant woman though she was, she had a certain stateliness in all her actions, a dignity in all she did.

'Merely, dear Mrs Cable, that you are too late to get anything from him. He will not recover consciousness.'

'Too late to get?' she asked gravely, raising her tall form and looking coldly at the ex-missionary. 'To get what? I want nothing of him.'

'O no, my good woman; of course not. I know your story. You might, had you been in time, have secured something; but—you are too late. He will never move hand or tongue again.'

'I—I take anything of him? I ask anything of him?' She shook her head. 'You may know my story, but you do not know me. I came, not to get, but to give.'

'To give what?'

'What you would neither understand nor value. Leave me alone with him.'

He did not care to remain. He went over to the *secrétaire*, locked it, and took away the key.

'You will call me if he is worse, if there is any change,' he said in a tone of indifference. He did not care to keep up appearances before Bessie Cable, who could injure or benefit him in no way. She slightly bowed her head. Then, twirling the key on his forefinger, he went out.

'Please, sir,' said the maid, 'is that the key? Miss Cornelius has pulled down the bellrope; she do want her sherry—awful!'

When Bessie Cable was alone in the room with Gabriel Gotham, she took the lamp, and with steady hand carried it to the bedside and held it up, that the light might fall full on him. He lay before her a poor broken wretch, with a bandage round his head, the back of which was crushed in, and with an injured spine. Had

the skull alone been fractured, the surgeon would have operated; with the broken spine it was useless. His eyelids were half closed; the glitter of the white of the eyes could be seen beneath them. His breathing was noisy, showing pressure on the brain. The weak mouth was half open, showing the teeth. There was no beauty, no nobility in the face, nothing to attract love.

Bessie had not so steadily and for long looked at him since he had betrayed and left her. Now, as she studied him, in the bright circle of light cast by the lamp, she thought how wonderful it was that after their long separation, she should be with him again, that he should be without a loving hand to smooth his pillow, a tearful eye to watch for his last breath.

In that very room, many, many years ago, she had watched him when he was ill with scarlet fever. Then she had insisted on being his nurse, and she had attended him faithfully, till she herself took the fever. When she was ill, he did not come near her in the lodge.

She looked round the room. Old times came back. She tried to trace the features of the sick boy, laid on that same bed, in the face of the dying man. The face was much changed, and yet it was the same: the face is the hieroglyph of the soul, the picture that gives expression to the idea. Here, all through life had been a cowardly, selfish, ignoble mind; and it had written its characters in every line and curve of the commonplace face.

As Bessie looked at him, her eyes were dry, a sternness was in them, and her brows were set, as were her lips. When she knew he was injured and dying, she went to him. Who had such a right as she? In the time of his prosperity, she kept away; but when he was cast down and broken, she came to him, as was natural.

As she stood, considering his face, her mind ranged over the time they were together, their childhood, the protection she had extended to the feeble lad, and the love and pity, the love that had sprung out of the pity wherewith she had regarded him. She had loved him. She had loved none but him, and it seemed strange to herself now that this could have been.

Then she thought of the short happiness of their married life, and then the agony of her disenchantment. Now the hand that held the lamp began to tremble, and the lights and shadows about the sick man's face to dance; her hand trembled with wrath at the recollection of the injustice done her—done her by this man, lying before her.

The hand of God had sought and found him, and punished him. She believed Cornelli's story. What more probable than that the sudden apparition of his son should make Gabriel Gotham spring back, oblivious of the gap behind him? Could he have seen him appear and remain seated, unmoved? Her heart was filled with conflicting emotions—wrath at her wrong, pity for his condition.

'That is true which I said to him,' she muttered; 'the plant Forgiveness is hard to strike, and difficult to get to flower.'

He had imbibed, he had ruined her whole life. She who had been so strong and confident, had lost her hope in life after her betrayal. Without any fault of her own, her character

had been blasted; and a stain rested on her son. She had scarce mentioned his father to Richard, and Richard had refrained from asking about him. He feared to know all. She was a dishonoured woman in the eyes of her son; this wretched man on the bed had put a barrier of suspicion between her son and her. Richard could not regard her with that holy reverence that a son should have for a mother whose name is without a spot.

She had had a hard battle to fight for some years to maintain herself and her child, too proud to accept assistance from the Gotham family. She, who might have been an honest man's wife, ruling her house, surrounded by her children, had been for long alone, poor, unhappy. Indeed, she had a great debt of wrong written up in her heart against this man she was now looking on.

In physics, all forces are correlated; heat and light are but different phases of the same force, which manifests itself now in one way, then in another; and heat translates itself into light, and light relapses into mere heat. It is the same in psychics. The various passions are correlated, various manifestations of the same energy. Love becomes momentarily hate, but then sometimes as momentarily reverts to love.

For nearly forty years Bessie Cable had nursed her wrongs, and had eaten out her heart with rage and gall; and now, as she looked at the cause of all her misery, the bitterness rose up and overflowed her soul; but at the same moment Gabriel opened his eyes; for one brief instant they seemed to gather consciousness, and he muttered, 'Bessie!'

In a minute, all the hate, the wrath, were gone. In a minute, love, pity, sweetness, gushed hot and strong through her heart. It is said that the Amazon is sometimes checked by belts of weed that form across the river, and weave into a vegetable felt, upwards, downwards, athwart, and in and out, making a dense impenetrable barrier; and the mighty stream, the main artery of a continent, is arrested, and thrown back to inundate vast tracts of land. Then, all at once it breaks its chain of green, and the mighty volume sweeps along its proper channel, carrying with it, in fragments rolled over and torn to shreds, the weedy belt. So is it with the human heart, so was it now with that of gray-haired Bessie Cable. Everything was forgotten—the wrongs, resentment, privations, heartaches, the woven and interlaced hedge of stubborn pride—all went down and went away in a moment, and the great natural artery of Love burst and poured forth and suffused the poor wretch on his deathbed—a creature as unconscious now of what he received as he had ever been incapable of valuing that precious flood.

Wondrous is the generosity, the power of forgiveness in the human heart! Mercy, says Shakespeare, droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven upon the earth beneath; but forgiveness wells up from the deeps of the heart itself. It may be stamped down, and choked and overpaved, till it seems that it is no more there; and yet at last, at an unconsidered moment, it breaks forth, it dissolves the hardest crust, and flows in newness, all-embracingness, purifying and refreshing.

Bessie was on her knees by the bed, and the tears rolled down her aged cheeks. She held the hand that had been given her once, and been withdrawn from her. She looked longingly at the dull eyes that had recognised her for a moment, listened to hear again her name coupled with a word of love from the lips that had spoken.

The house was still that night. The servants had gone to bed. Mr Cornellis was in his own room; he was satisfied. In an hour or two, the inheritance would be his, and his embarrassments at an end. Miss Judith was quiet; she had got her sherry.

Bessie was glad that she was undisturbed, that she was left alone with Gabriel that night when he passed away—but did not pass till the plant Forgiveness had flowered, and been laid on his dead heart.

OXFORD PASS SCHOOLS.

'MODS.'

WHEN the freshman has emerged in safety from his first great plunge, and has leisure to draw breath again and contemplate the new prospect opening before him, he feels as though an illimitable tract of time lay between himself and the next trial through which he has to pass—'Mods.' This is on the supposition that he has dared to confront the terrors of 'smalls' in his first term; and that, having so ventured, he has issued in triumph from the arduous conflict. Indeed, in these later days it has been rendered possible to encounter smalls on the very threshold of 'varsity' life, and, by taking 'the examination in lieu of responsions'—which is now held before term commences—to come into residence with nothing to intervene, with no yawning chasm to cross, before mods itself. Many manifest advantages and valuable opportunities attend this course; but, on the other hand, drawbacks and ugly possibilities are connected therewith. In the first place, it is a huge mistake to look upon Oxford merely as a temple of learning, and upon Oxford life simply as a means to that end. Not the training of mind, but the moulding of character, is the true educational function of a modern university career; and this moulding is effected by the tone of the society, by the spirit of the associates, in which and amongst whom a man's lot is cast.

Innumerable are the factions, countless the cliques, to which it is possible for the young Oxonian to attach himself. 'The world is all before him where to choose,' and he generally chooses wrong. Usually, the larger the college, the more numerous are the 'sets,' into which it is divided. Thus, for example, there will be the rowing set, the reading set, the cricketing set, the 'society' set, and also the fast or rowdy set, whose prime glory is to make night and the quad hideous by blowing horns, howling songs, smashing furniture, and otherwise disturbing the repose of their more peaceful contemporaries. Other sets there are of which it would be wearisome to speak, but into one or other of them the freshman will inevitably be absorbed, and

from that day forward it will be his ambition to shine in the manner which his friends' ideas dictate. That these ideas and those of his people at home often differ considerably, need hardly be said; but the undergraduate must be taken for what he is—a mortal and fallible being, infirm of purpose, and easily swayed from one pursuit to another. If this be the case, it is important that he should have an immediate object, the necessary work for which may tend to keep him straight. Smalls made just such a goal as was required, and the 'grind' it entailed was frequently of no slight profit to him in the critical opening weeks of his course. Viewed in this light, it will be seen that even a 'plough' may have its uses; although the youth so favoured is seldom grateful for the benefit thereby conferred.

But mods cannot be attempted until the end of one year from matriculation, and need not be tackled until the expiration of two; while it is pretty safe to assume that the typical passman—unless much stirred by external influences—will elect the latter alternative. Hence it becomes altogether too distant an affair to furnish the desired stimulus, even if the work it requires were sufficient—which it is not—to occupy so many months. Thus, then, our representative friend, when he has fulfilled his destiny as regards smalls, finds himself launched into the Oxford world with practically nothing on earth to do except amuse himself to the best of his ability. Not that the existence of the passman is entirely consumed in social festivity; on the contrary, when the efforts of his scout and the chapel bell have succeeded in extracting him from his balmy couch, he will be expected to spend two or three weary hours out of his morning in a draughty lecture-room, stumbling himself, and hearing others stumble, through various passages of Greek and Roman authors, which neither he nor they have thought it worth while to prepare beforehand. Although it is true that the good derived from these matutinal studies is infinitesimal, and that the same man will often get up in a couple of days' earnest effort the work which he has been inefficiently bungling over for a term, still, they have at least the merit of preventing passmen from quite forgetting their classics in the interval between smalls and mods.

The afternoon is the time when young Oxford is to be seen at its best, disporting itself with infinite gusto at the various pastimes in which it rejoices. Rowing is perhaps the amusement most truly characteristic of the place; for cricket, popular though it undoubtedly is, can only be enjoyed during the summer term, while the river can be frequented all the year round. In their appropriate seasons, football, lawn-tennis, and every species of athletics, are patronised by passmen, in common with their more intellectual brethren, with an ardour and energy very different from the manner in which they seek to fulfil the ostensible objects of their sojourn at the university.

Many other means have likewise been judiciously provided wherewith to pass away the time. But without stopping to enumerate them, let us suppose our passman to have sipped the cup of every pleasure within his reach, and to

be at last approaching the end of his second year's residence.

And plainly and more plainly
Now through the gloom appears

the dreadful shadow of mods, once far off, and, as it were, veiled from his eyes by the 'time-mists' which lay between him and it, but now looming dreadfully close before his bewildered gaze. Parental anxieties begin to be aroused; exhortations to 'do something' flow in upon him thick and fast; his college tutor, when he submits to him his weekly or bi-weekly scrap of Latin prose, looks grave at the appearance of errors which would formerly only have awakened in him a gentle hilarity. Finally, some of his own familiar friends will have already been in for, but not passed through the dread ordeal; and failing therein, their places know them no more. For it should be clearly understood that there is a gulf beneath the feet of Oxford men, at the giddy verge of which they ever walk. A slight mistake, and they vanish from the scene, though their names may still linger on, always fresh and green—in the memories of the tradesmen in whose debt they are. 'Facilis descensus Averni' is fearfully true as regards the modern undergraduate. Smooth and easy is the descent from college to hall, or to 'the unattached' ('non-collegiate' is their new title); whence, again, a transition is easily accomplished to regions where country air revives the jaded spirit. This last process is called 'rustication.'

Now, there are two terrific subjects included in pass mods, the thought of which, when he views them from afar, is enough to freeze the blood of the average passman. One of these gorgons is styled 'Unseen,' and the other 'Logic.' Let not the reader also take fright at the first of these tremendous words. No weird reference to the dim mysteries of another world is intended by the title, which merely indicates the task of translating, at sight, brief passages from classical authors not previously 'got up' by the aid of a crib and a dictionary. Obviously, it is too much to expect that a man who has not given up more than ten or twelve years of his existence to the almost exclusive study of two dead languages, should be able to read little bits from easy books in those tongues without being helped by a translation. At any rate, if this is not obvious, it is nevertheless true. The pass modsmen, at that stage of his history which we are now contemplating, is quite unable to construe even those books which he has in some sort read during the college lectures he has had to attend, much less will he be competent to make out the sense of extracts from works with which he is wholly unacquainted.

But what of that other obstacle, that spectre, labelled 'Logic,' which stands across his path, like a guard set to bar his way through mods? Logic! It is a word well calculated to pale the cheek of the nursery-maid, or make the bold heart of the passman falter. Of all that may be comprehended under this term, of the true nature of the science which it denotes, he is profoundly ignorant, until, at the call of fate, he daringly probes its mighty depths, and crammed with a manual and prompted by a coach, triumphantly replies to the questions set him. (N.B., He is equally ignorant afterwards.)

The real truth is that logic, appalling though it sounds, is taken up as a preferable alternative to mathematics, since, by common report, it is known to be so easy that the veriest 'duffer' can pass in it with a very slight amount of exertion. 'Wonder,' says Carlyle, 'is the basis of worship;' and considered as subtly invented to keep alive the feeling of amazement in the human breast, even pass mods logic may be allowed to have its uses; but not otherwise. Certainly it is not likely that any one will be found hardy enough to say that it sharpens the intelligence or strengthens the understanding of any of those who reach the requisite standard of proficiency. Even when the astonished passman has learnt how to construct 'a syllogism in Barbara,' and, in the exhibition of such wit as his soul loves, to produce a 'collocation of three propositions' like the following—All men are fallible. Examiners are men. Therefore—examiners are fallible—it is doubtful whether the knowledge he has acquired affects his usual fashion of thinking and arguing, any more than the English grammar taught in a National School influences the mode of speech habitual to the scholars.

More, however, than 'unseen,' and far more than logic, 'Books' are usually regarded by the wary as constituting the great difficulty in the way of gaining a mods testamur. No less than three books must be selected out of a lengthy list which is published, and varied from time to time, by the Board of Studies. The real choice of the passman is practically considerably more limited in extent, for the average candidate shuns as he would the plague such authors as Thucydides, Plato, Aristotle, and Æschylus. Perhaps Xenophon's *Memorabilia* has been a choice most commonly made, and this is very frequently prepared for the schools by the aid of a certain well-known little word-for-word crib, in which into every Greek sentence is interpolated its English equivalent. In these convenient little volumes, it is quite possible to read through the three given books of the *Memorabilia* in as many days, or even in less time; but candour compels us to admit that fatal disasters have been known to befall those who, relying solely on such preparation, find themselves, when in the actual examination, deprived of their beloved translation. There is indeed an easy way of evading this danger; namely, to take the indispensable resource with you in your pocket, and have recourse thereto in those moments in which the eyes of the examiner are not turned in your direction. That this is a method not unattended with danger, is evident, but all the same it is one more than occasionally resorted to.

'If I sit there,' said a gentleman whose vast experience entitled him to speak with authority—'if I sit there'—showing by his action that he meant the front of a room—'I am ploughed; but if I sit here'—indicating the back—'I am through.'

Oxford moral sentiment draws a wide distinction between cribbing in a pass and in an honour school. The same man who meets with no disapproval when he unblushingly boasts of the effectual use he has made of his surreptitious aids in the first case, would find himself universally banned if he were known to have acted in a similar way in the second.

The whole amount of classics which must be read for pass mods is certainly not great. Suppose that some typical candidate elects Xenophon for his Greek author, and Cicero and Terence for his two Latin ones—by five or six weeks' steady application, at the rate of about as many hours a day, he could unquestionably prepare the given books in a style which would—to speak paradoxically—win him honours in his pass school. But this assumes that our typical being is capable of steady continuous effort. Now, if he were to go in for mods in the term after he passed smalls, while he was still under the influence of the (comparatively) good habits formed during his school-life, and fresh from the grind implied in his last achievement, it is very probable that he might be found equal to the necessary exertion. But as, on the contrary, he is only beginning to face his difficulties after an interval of nearly two years spent in dissipation and idleness, he is about as much disinclined and unfit for any sustained mental labours as anybody can be. What he does do is something like this: towards the end of the last term before that in which he is compelled, by the rules of his college, to present himself for the 'first public examination,' as it is designated officially, he gets frightened, as aforesaid, by the near approach of danger, and makes up what he is pleased to call his mind—not to work hard now, for that, he feels, is impossible; but that he will work hard during the vacation. Delusive resolve! His vacation is passed like all his other similar periods of absence from Oxford; and when he comes up again to reside, the fateful portion of time left him before the schools commence, he desperately determines that he will indeed 'simply grind'—next week.

So the days ebb away, each signalised by a futile vow of reformation on the morrow, until the season at length arrives, about ten days before the exam., when he must once more 'put his name down.' In the interim he will probably have gone to a coach for his logic, and perhaps also for his books; but too late he discovers that the toil of the tutor is of no avail unless backed by that of the pupil. At this point he will perhaps derive a certain courage from the very desperation of his circumstances, and comfort himself by calling to mind a saying current at Oxford: 'A week for a pass in mods, and three weeks for a class in greats.' He badly off for time! Why, he has got ten days left—nearly a week and a half—without counting the hours of subsidiary work he can get in, while the schools are going on. Alas, poor passman! If once he lay that flattering unction to his soul, he will be more hopelessly sped than was even Yorick when Hamlet fingered his skull. All that is left of him, after he has been ploughed, will become a fit theme for the moralist.

And now, for these few remaining days, the passman *does* work. The agonies he endures are frightful, and it is to be hoped may be accepted as expiatory of his previous idleness—a sort of purgatorial cleansing for former sin. Fourteen, sixteen, nay, eighteen hours out of the twenty-four are consumed in such labour as mortality may scarce endure. Now, of a verity, the wet towel and midnight oil of traditional fame are called into use. His brow matted in wet band-

ages, the basin of cold water, to renew the moisture, by his side, the cup of green tea or strongest coffee before him—there, through the long hours of night, until the light of his lamp grows dim before that of the sun, the miserable sufferer from delay strives at once to 'redeem his misspent moments past,' and to resist the calls which nature makes to sleep. Yet even now, even under this dire stress of necessity, he cannot concentrate his attention. In vain he glances from the text of his book to the pages of his crib, from the pages of his crib to those of his book. The words which he reads at one moment are gone from his mind the next; in spite of his utmost endeavours, his thoughts still wander far afield. 'The gods are just, and of our pleasant vices make instruments to scourge us;' and oftentimes, in the loneliness of his solitary despair, is he tempted to curse those festal hours of sloth which have robbed him of the power of honest work.

While the night is thus passed in desolate toil, the minutes of the day are spent in the company of his coach and of his 'reader.' The latter is a being who earns a lucrative and beneficent livelihood by acting as 'minister to a mind diseased.' What some celebrated physician, called in at the last moment when other advice fails, is to the sick man, that the 'reader' is to the unprepared undergraduate. His function is to read aloud English translations of those classical authors upon which his employer may chance to be engaged, whilst the latter holds the original in his hands. Nothing can be simpler than this process. It enables the student to get along quite as fast as he would if his subject-matter were really written in 'the vulgar tongue.' It is indeed unquestionably the speediest, and it may be added, also the least efficacious method of 'getting-up one's books' that the ingenuity of man hath yet invented. By the aid, then, of this faithful—at eighteenth pence per hour—retainer, the 'promising young man' whose career we are following manages to read, or to have read to him, about two-thirds, say, of his appointed work in the week or so to which he has confined himself. The rest he 'chances.' The Holy Gospels, 'in the original Greek,' are in like manner, it is to be feared, consigned to Fortune, a goddess who finds many devoted worshippers amongst Oxford passmen. And now, the very day before mods begins, that deity does indeed befriend him. A piece of most extraordinary good luck falls to his lot—he has the toothache. Regarded quite by itself, apart from surrounding circumstances, to have the toothache may not seem a very desirable thing; but, considered in relation to our hero's present position, it must be admitted that no greater boon could well be granted to him. For what avail the most strenuous labours, the most profound learning, the most varied and versatile intellectual powers, against this direful and insidious complaint? What could Cardinal Newman, or Professor Huxley, or Mr Herbert Spencer achieve, if examined in theology, or biology, or philosophy, while afflicted with this malady? Not a slight, common, every-day toothache, be it understood, but a real, raging, throbbing, maddening toothache, such as it would satisfy the hatred of the most malevolent individual to know that his

enemy were suffering. Obviously if, notwithstanding this dreadful drawback, the passman still succeeds in getting his testamur, he will have deserved the praise and admiration of mankind; he will have done something quite equal to a man *without* the toothache getting six university scholarships and a 'double first.' But if, in spite of his heroic struggles to 'conquer agony,' human nature proves too weak, and a 'plough' results, he will receive the sorrowful compassion, instead of the adverse criticism of his relatives and friends.

We must perforce pause here a moment to note the beautiful and instructive ways of Providence. During all that time when, far from being considered a blessing, it would have been looked upon as an unmitigated nuisance, the toothache held aloof, waiting, as it were, really, almost as if it were alive—until it was wanted, and at last, at the very moment when it can be of the greatest possible service—then it comes! It haunts, like a ghost, the threshold of the schools; nay, as we have seen, it sallies forth therefrom and assails those who intend to enter, before they have arrived. But the strongest proof of its discrimination, and that which most clearly shows it must be friendly to man, is the fact that it is hardly ever known to attack those who would resent its approach. It passes by the hard-reading honour-man and the well-prepared passman—when he exists—to greedily embrace the poor creature, who would otherwise be left without an excuse, hopelessly ploughed. The present writer takes credit to himself for being the first—so far as he knows—to draw attention to the peculiarities of this curious and interesting 'varsity disease, the strange prevalence of which, whenever the schools commence, no one who has been at Oxford will dare to deny.

Racked, therefore, with physical pain, haggard, blear-eyed, and wan from lack of sleep, the wretch whose woes we chronicle undergoes his first day of mods. Here a long series of 'sells' awaits him. His good-fortune begins and ends with the toothache. He had calculated that 'books' must inevitably come first, and that he could not possibly have 'logic' until the second day, so that he would have plenty of time between whiles to get up all those notes he had put off reading over until now. Yet, lo and behold, 'logic' is the very paper which confronts him when he takes his seat! Those fiends the examiners have evidently done it on purpose. His paper in the afternoon he had naturally expected would be also 'books,' but it is actually divinity, a subject which he has not yet even touched, as it is well known that it never comes on until the last day of the exam., so that he ought to have had ample opportunity to cram himself in it during the hours of the intervening Sabbath.

As it was in the beginning, so it continues to be till the end of the exam. Every successive paper except the last constitutes a fresh 'sell,' so that before the paper-work is finished, he feels that he is already ploughed, to all intents and purposes, ten times over. Yet still he will not, he cannot, quite abandon hope. He goes on, and refrains from 'scratching,' in the belief that, by some extraordinary fluke, he may still pull through; and even the horrors of his *vivâ* do not

entirely destroy this fond delusion. At last—at last the stroke falls, and he learns that it has been all—all in vain that he has toiled and endured—the toothache has triumphed—not *mods*; but it has been too much for him. 'Somehow,' says Dickens, 'it always is the salmon' which thickens the speech and otherwise affects gentlemen who have been dining. Somehow, in the case of ploughed undergraduates, it always is the toothache which is to blame.

OLD STAIRS: A STORY OF LONG AGO.

IN SIX CHAPTERS.

CHAP. I.—THE MESSENGER.

UP a narrow lane leading from Thames Street towards St Paul's stands an old tavern. It is evening—a dark, boisterous evening in March; and the dim lamp which hangs over the doorway of the tavern, with the words *Loyal Tar* written in black letters on each side, flickers and blinks as though in imminent danger of being put out; for the wind comes and goes in gusts from every quarter. No sooner has one gust entered the lane from the neighbouring river, than another meets it half-way, as if the dismal approach to this tavern were a favourite rendezvous of storms as well as 'tars.' With one of these gusts, a stalwart young sailor turns into the lane, walking with a firm step in spite of the weather, and arrives under the tavern lamp. Having pushed open the swing-door—at which the wind roughly assists—the sailor descends a foot below the roadway into a well-lighted taproom. Here a crowd of men—captains of barges and steam-tugs and such-like craft—men of a bold and briny aspect, if not freshly salted, are laughing and drinking and talking loudly. A cloud of tobacco-smoke floats about the low, blackened ceiling of the noisy bar. The young sailor, passing through this crowd, after a glance at the weather-beaten faces, steps into a snug little bar-parlour beyond.

A cheerful fire, burning in an old-fashioned, open chimney, lit up panelled walls of polished oak until they shone again. The room was almost deserted. Two or three men of a nautical bearing sat round the hearth, smoking long clay pipes and drinking grog. The sailor gave a cursory glance at the circle, as he had done at those in the bar, and then he sat down in the midst of these 'loyal tars,' as the frequenters of the tavern were called, and filled his pipe and ordered his glass, as if prepared to make himself at home. An awkward silence had fallen upon the company thus gathered together at the entrance of this seafaring youth. Every one puffed vigorously at his pipe, and stared with a vacant gaze at the fire.

'A gale!' said the sailor, as a strong gust of wind swept by, rattling the window as it passed—'a regular gale! If I'd not taken an oath—if I'd not solemnly promised, mates, to bear a message from the dead before making another voyage, I should have been at this moment in mid-ocean. It's like my luck! When the wind's blowing a hurricane at sea and the waves are running mountains high, and there's a chance of shipwreck, sure as fate you'll find me sitting, like a lord-mayor, before a blazing fire. Ain't it maddening? Why, bless me, when I spied these words, *Loyal Tar*,

written up on the tavern lamp outside, I felt almost ashamed to come in !'

All eyes were now turned with some curiosity towards the young man. His bright, honest eyes, his sunburnt cheeks, awakened interest. His manly voice and irresistible frankness raised a smile on every upturned face.

'Why, mate,' remarked a handsome, dark-bearded man, a man with a kind expression and a keen eye, 'is it worth while to court danger, when it comes to us often enough without being courted? At anyrate,' he concluded, 'there is surely nothing to be ashamed of, nothing whatever, in being free from shipwreck, and'—

'Ain't there?—Perhaps,' said the sailor—'perhaps you don't know what it is, mate, to have all your friends in one boat—do you?'

The dark-bearded man shook his head. 'You'd better put all your eggs into one basket,' said he, 'than all your friends into one boat.'

'They're on board the brig *Leander*, every one of them, out in the storm. Yes, mate, every one.'

'Lor, man,' said a young fellow, looking up and winking at the company, 'haven't you even got a sweetheart ashore?'

'No; not even that,' said the sailor. 'If I had'—

'What then?'

'Just this. I was thinking—though I've no experience whatever—that no sweetheart'd love a man the less for wishing to share every danger with his shipmates at sea. If all hands were lost,' said the sailor, 'and Mark Ringwood ashore, he never could look an honest man or woman in the face again.'

'Ringwood?' said the dark-bearded man. 'Is that your name?'

'Yes, that's me.'

'My name is Jarvis—John Jarvis.—You were saying,' he observed, 'that you had got a message to deliver—weren't you?'

'Yes. I was told,' said Ringwood, 'by him who is now dead, to look in at the *Loyal Tar*. It was here, he assured me, I should find the address of the man to whom I have promised to deliver this message. A man,' he added, 'of the name of Caleb Cobb.'

'Old Caleb Cobb?' asked Jarvis. 'I can give you his address, and welcome.'

'I'll thank you heartily for it.'

Jarvis wrote upon a slip of paper, 'Caleb Cobb, No. 1 Old Stairs, Thames Street,' and handed it to Ringwood.—'You know something about him, I suppose?'

'Nothing,' replied Ringwood, 'except that he must be—I am led to conclude—a very old man.'

'Yes, very old,' said Jarvis; 'and very poor. For many years he was a lamplighter; but he has had to give that up.'

'How so?'

'He has lost his sight.'

'What?' cried Ringwood with concern. 'A blind man?'

'Yes; in total darkness,' replied Jarvis. 'His grand-daughter—a most devoted girl—supports him by her needle. Otherwise'—

'Does she, though? A girl who can do that, mate, must be the right sort.'

'She's one in a thousand. And she's as pretty,' continued Jarvis, 'as she is good.—But talking of

old Caleb Cobb,' he added, 'it's a wonder to me that we haven't seen him here to-night. When the wind's high and the lamps give an unsteady light, he often wanders in the neighbourhood of Thames Street all alone. He thinks the lamps may be blown out, I fancy, and the streets left in darkness; and he sometimes gets as anxious as if he needed them himself to light him on his way.'

Jarvis had risen, and was knocking the ashes out of his pipe before taking his leave. 'Well, Mr Ringwood,' said he, 'I hope your message to Caleb Cobb, whatever it may be, will 'liven him a bit. He always has been, as long as I've known him, what you might call down-hearted; and he don't get more cheery, like some men, with old age.—Good-night.'

'Good-night,' said Ringwood; 'and I hope, Mr Jarvis, it ain't for the last time.'

'I hope so.'

Buttoning his coat closely about him, John Jarvis stepped out into the dark and gusty night. He walked briskly along the lane in the direction of Thames Street. Before he had gone many paces, a monotonous tapping noise upon the stone pavement, accompanied by a feeble, shuffling foot-step, attracted his attention. He stopped instantly, and called out: 'Caleb Cobb, is that you?'

In those days the streets were lit with oil-lamps. It was a light which did little to assist in distinguishing features, or even forms, unless people happened to meet within the limited circle of radiation. Jarvis, waiting under one of these lamps, peered into the shadows.

'Ay, ay, John; it's Caleb Cobb, the old lamplighter.' Feeling his way adroitly by the aid of a thick stick, and keeping persistently near some iron railings, a little old man now appeared in sight. He was shaky and bent with age; and yet, when a gust of wind rushed by him and threatened to sweep him off his legs, he grasped his stick and bravely stood his ground.

'Why, Mr Cobb,' said Jarvis, stepping forward to take his hand, 'isn't it a little imprudent to trust yourself out alone on a blowy night like this?'

Caleb Cobb stopped and rested almost caressingly against the bar of an ancient gateway, over which there were a rusty iron skull and two cross-bones. This gateway led into one of those old City churchyards which might be met with in this neighbourhood almost at every turning. 'Maybe, John,' said the old lamplighter in a tremulous voice—'maybe. But I'm restless on a blowy night; I can't stop indoors. It reminds me of the past.—Is the lamp above us, John, burning pretty brightly to-night?'

'As brightly, Mr Cobb, as can be expected.' Jarvis looked up smilingly at the dim light, which threw the ghost of a halo round them.

'Then I think,' said Caleb—'I think I'll sit down here on these steps till you come back.—You were on your way to Old Stairs; weren't you?'

'Yes; I was going to meet Pearl.'

'Bless her!' replied Caleb with tenderness. —'I say, John,' he added, 'is Pearl your sweetheart yet?'

'No, Mr Cobb. I wish'—

'So do I, John,' said the old man—'so do I! There's no man I know of that I'd like better

than you for a grandson. Not, you understand,' he continued, 'not that I'm really Pearl's grandfather. No, no. I'm an old bachelor, John—an old bachelor. But they nicknamed me, years ago, "Grandfather Cobb;" and Pearl has called me "grandad" ever since she could speak. She's a nephew's child. But he's been dead these seventeen years, come Easter, and little Pearl has no living relation except me.'

'I've heard that,' said Jarvis, in a thoughtful tone—'I've heard that. But it's the first time I've heard, Mr Cobb, that you were a bachelor.'

'That's likely enough. I've mentioned it, John, to no one—not a soul—for fifty years.—Look yonder!' Caleb added, pointing between the bars into the old churchyard, and with his face turned so eagerly in the same direction, that a passing thought crossed John's mind that the old lamplighter had recovered his sight—'look yonder! Does the lamplight fall beyond this gateway?'

'Yes; a foot or two.'

'Does it fall, John, upon a broken column?'

'No. But I can just distinguish something,' said Jarvis—'something answering to the description, among the shadows.'

'Ah! Then, that's it. She was buried there.'

'Who?'

'My sweetheart,' said the old man.

His voice was subdued; and there was so much reverence in his tone, that Jarvis regarded him with a newly awakened sense of curiosity and affection. His sweetheart? The man who could keep green the memory of his passion, and for so many years, must indeed have loved!

'A sad, sad story, doubtless,' said Jarvis sympathetically.

Caleb Cobb, who was kneeling upon the worn steps with his face still directed towards the tomb, now rose slowly with the aid of his stick, and turning round, lifted his blind eyes towards the light. There were tears upon his wrinkled cheeks. 'John,' said he, 'it's more than sad. It's a story of treachery and crime.—I'm not superstitious,' he added, lowering his voice almost to a whisper, 'not very; but I've always had the fancy, ever since her death, when the day comes round, that something strange is about to happen. It's fifty years, John, since she died—fifty years to-day.'

These words somewhat startled Jarvis. His odd meeting and conversation with the young sailor, Mark Ringwood, at the *Loyal Tar* recurred to him. He had spoken of a message from the dead, and he had expressed an eagerness to obtain Caleb Cobb's address. Ought he to relate the incident on the spot to the old lamplighter?

No. This was neither the time nor place. At the fireside, in Caleb Cobb's own home, the subject, though painful, might be touched upon with advantage as a forewarning of worse to come. But not here—not out in this gusty night. The old man was in no frame of mind to listen, as Jarvis conjectured, to what must be the prelude to a distressful revelation. How could he tell? The shock, even if he mentioned the name, might prove fatal. Was not this message which Mark Ringwood had been commissioned to deliver from the dead, a complete mystery to Jarvis?

'You will tell me some day, I hope, your sad

story,' said he, placing his hand kindly upon Caleb's shoulder.

'Yes—some day, John,' he answered—'some day you shall hear my story. But not to-night.—Go, now, and meet my Pearl. I'll rest here, as I was saying, until you come back. It's not cold; and you won't be very long?'

Caleb Cobb sank down once more upon the steps, grasped his stick, and rested his forehead on his hands. In this attitude he sat, waiting, at the old gateway.

CHAP. II.—CALEB'S HOME.

Upon the Thames, where large barges lay under the black shadows of a lofty warehouse, the wind met with no resistance except the current. The tide was ebbing fast; and the gale, blowing luckily in the opposite direction, created a rough surface on the dark water. At this point of the river, at the edge of a jetty or landing-place, stood a tall girl. She was clinging for safety to a wooden post with one hand, and in the other she held a lantern. The reflection of this lantern, thrown to the bottom of some stone steps, brought into relief a small boat; and in this boat was the shadowy form of a young sailor, bending forward to fasten a rope through an iron ring.

'Is this Old Stairs?'

'Yes,' said the girl—'Old Stairs, Queenhithe.'

'Ah! Then I've steered, at last,' said the sailor, 'into port.—Can you tell me,' he added, 'which is Number One?'

'Number One Old Stairs?' asked the girl, with some surprise in her manner.

'Yes; old Caleb's house,' he replied—'old Caleb Cobb, the lamplighter.' He had secured the boat; and, mounting the steps, now reached the girl's side. She turned the lantern, with sudden curiosity, upon the sailor's face. It was the handsome, jovial Mark Ringwood.

'Why,' said the girl, lowering the light with the swiftness of a bashful woman dropping her eyelids—'why, I live at Number One. And I'm'—she added hesitatingly—'I'm Caleb Cobb's grand-daughter.'

'His grand-daughter? Well,' said Ringwood, 'if that ain't odd!—Now, what—excuse me asking—what might be your name?'

'Pearl.'

'And now,' continued Ringwood, 'tell me, Miss Pearl, is your grandfather at home?'

'No, not yet.—I think he has gone to a tavern, out of Thames Street, called the *Loyal Tar*. He sometimes goes there.'

'Why, I've just come—not half an hour ago—from that very tavern. I've missed him.'

'Perhaps, if the business is not pressing, you would call to-morrow.'

'It is pressing. I've a message—as I was telling John Jarvis'—

'Do you know Mr Jarvis?'

'Yes. That is, I met him to-night at the *Loyal Tar*.—I've a message,' repeated the young sailor, 'from the dead. And I'd like—if it is possible—to deliver it to-night. It would set my mind more at rest.'

'Will you come back, then, in an hour?'

'Yes.—But suppose,' added Ringwood, tapping mysteriously the breast-pocket of his pea-jacket—'suppose I leave a parcel with you? It's about

this business; and it's rather valuable. I've just fetched it from my lodging over the water. I don't like carrying it about after dark, and'—

'I'll take care of it, if you wish.' She looked towards a row of houses which stood upon the jetty, facing the river. They were very small houses, two stories high, with one window on each story. Pearl crossed the road, and placing her hand upon the latch of the door of the house nearest the water-side, opened it and stepped in. She stepped at once into a little room—for these houses did not waste any space in passages—a room of the neatest and cosiest description. Ringwood followed, and closed the door behind him; for the wind, rushing in without ceremony, made the little log-fire roar again, and threatened to blow out the lamp, which stood upon the table under the window like a beacon.

'Ah!' exclaimed Ringwood, 'that's the light I saw when I got entangled among the barges. It gave me the notion to cry out.'

'I'm glad—very glad indeed—it was so useful,' said Pearl. 'Grandfather, although he is quite blind, trims this lamp and lights it without my help, and leaves it in the window all night. It is all the lamplighting that he does, or can do, now. This corner house is called the "Little Lighthouse" by the boatmen and bargemen about here. They give grandfather, for his trouble, among them, three or four shillings a week. It is all he earns; but it almost pays the rent.'

She was standing upon the hearthrug at the fireside, glancing up timidly while she spoke into Mark Ringwood's face. He remained near the door, respectful in attitude, but with a look in his eyes of unfeigned admiration.

Pearl's beauty was singularly attractive. Every feature showed some sign of animation. Her bright hazel eyes, her dark quivering eyelashes, and the curved lines about her dimpling mouth, reflected endless lights and shades of expression; and as she now hastened to remove her bonnet and throw aside her cloak, displaying her wavy golden hair, tied up in a simple knot, Ringwood thought that he had never seen such a lovely girl.

He was dazzled; but he dared not—being a modest young sailor—gaze very long at Pearl. Taking from his breast-pocket the parcel which he had declared gave him some anxiety, he held it out to the girl and said: 'See! It's addressed "Caleb Cobb, London." It don't look of any particular value, does it? But it is, Miss Pearl; so, please, don't let the packet get lost.'

It was an oblong packet, like a large letter, and sealed in four places with black sealing-wax. Pearl took it and turned it over with fingers expressive of curiosity.

'And now,' continued Ringwood, 'I'll go. In an hour's time—weather permitting—I'll be back again.' As he spoke he placed his hand upon the latch.

Pearl stepped forward to detain him. 'Stay! Will you tell me your name?'

'I beg your pardon. My name is Mark Ringwood.'

'Well, then, Mr Ringwood, don't you think you should walk down Thames Street towards the *Loyal Tar*? You might meet my grandfather, or find him at the tavern.'

'I will do so. I've a message for him, Miss Pearl.'

'Ah!' said Pearl, looking with renewed interest into Ringwood's face—'now, I understand.'

'It's a message,' continued Ringwood, 'which, like the packet I've just given you, will leave me no rest until I've delivered it. In an hour's time, then, I'll be back again.' Once more the little fire roared as Ringwood, with a parting glance at Pearl, raised the latch and went out into the night.

Pearl sank down into her grandfather's armchair with her eyes still turned towards the door through which Mark Ringwood had passed, and it seemed as though she were following him in thought through the dark streets of the old city. Who was this young sailor that so chanced to cross her path? Yet something seemed to whisper to her: 'It would have been better had you two never met.'

Pearl could easily account for such disquieting reflections. She knew that a mystery—though ignorant of what it was—surrounded her grandfather's life. The strange words he had often let fall, and his still stranger manner, assured her that he had, years ago, met with some misfortune—a misfortune the recollection of which time had not effaced. She was unable to explain to herself, except in the way which pointed to this misfortune, an awakening disquietude concerning Mark Ringwood's appearance. She began as soon as he was gone to connect him seriously with the mystery. She regretted having let him go in search of her blind old grandfather without questioning him closely about his errand. This message of which he was the bearer might be of a distressful nature; perhaps too painful, even though referred to with delicacy and tact, to be borne by an aged and afflicted man.

She rose with a sudden impulse to her feet; and the sealed packet which Ringwood had confided to her care fell from her lap. She picked it up and examined the cover with an increased curiosity which seemed to confirm her fear. She was seized with a sudden resolution: she would go herself and meet her grandfather. The moment might be at hand when he would need her presence. She knew that the mere sound of her voice would give him confidence and strength, where another's voice would serve no purpose.

Pearl had resumed her cloak and bonnet and was standing with the packet in her hand, when she was surprised by a knock at the door. Thrusting the packet into a drawer in an old desk of her grandfather's, she stepped forward to admit the visitor. It was Jarvis.

'Where is grandfather?'

'I left him,' said Jarvis, 'seated on his favourite steps, not long ago.'

'At the old gateway?'

'Yes. He promised,' said Jarvis, 'that he would wait there for us.'

'Come,' said Pearl; 'let us go to grandfather. I want to see him at once.'

'What is the matter?'

Without answering, Pearl hurried out. Jarvis followed. In spite of the wind, the girl went quickly along. But at the corner of a street a strong gust met her full in the face. She would have fallen, had not Jarvis been at her side to save her.

'Won't you take my arm?' Jarvis ventured to suggest.

She accepted hesitatingly.

'Pearl! what have I done to offend you?'

'Nothing.—Come, quicker!' said she. 'I am thinking of grandfather. I wish he would not go out alone. I'm anxious about him to-night.—Come, quicker!'

She hastened on; and Jarvis, unable to get any satisfactory answer, after questioning her once or twice on their way concerning her anxiety, lapsed into silence.

It was growing late, and the streets were comparatively deserted. Those who were still out in the storm were hurrying home as fast as the weather would permit. The gale was not abating; it seemed, on the contrary, to be increasing in violence as the night advanced. They reached the corner of the churchyard. A prostrate form was lying motionless upon the step under the lamp. Pearl clutched her companion's hand and pointed towards it.

Jarvis sprang forward; and the girl, sick at heart, and half fainting with apprehension, crept after him, holding to the railings of the old churchyard for support.

THE ROYAL MINT GUARD.

At present, when there is the near prospect of the introduction of a new coinage, a glimpse at the doings of the little military party 'on guard' within the precincts of the Royal Mint may interest some readers. The situation of the Mint is perhaps too well known to require notice in this place; it may therefore suffice to say that the buildings—dating from 1810—stand on Tower Hill, and are in close proximity to the moat that encircles the Tower itself. In front is a sloping esplanade of considerable extent, which serves at once as a parade ground for the ceremony of 'mounting,' and as a sort of 'lung' for the neighbouring densely populated district. The constant presence of two sentinels on the upper portion of this open space may assure strangers that the adjacent group of buildings is of public importance.

The Royal Mint Guard, though it has a momentous charge, is but a kind of satellite of the Main Guard within the historical stronghold on the other margin of the ditch. It usually consists of sixteen men, together with a corporal and a sergeant, the latter of whom is in command. Of course, both these non-commissioned officers are 'men' as well as their subordinates; but the designation 'man' in the army is strictly confined in its application to a private soldier. There is one other member of the guard who is neither a non-commissioned officer nor a man: this personage is the inevitable drummer-boy, a great part of whose duty consists in carrying his instrument to the Mint and bearing it back to the Tower on the following morning. In addition to his drum or bugle, he generally takes on guard with him a few yards of cord and a fish-hook fashioned in a primitive manner, and with these articles finds occupation in a method to be hereafter alluded to.

Though the sergeant 'on Mint' is virtually invested with supreme authority, the captain of the Main Guard visits the extra-mural party shortly after mid-day—just when the results of the cooks' labours are being placed on the tables.

One of the sentries having apprised the sergeant of his approach, the guard is drawn up on the esplanade, and salutes the officer, to whom the stereotyped report, 'All correct, sir,' is made. Then the captain glances in a passing way at the men, or perhaps, if a youthful guardsman, carefully inspects them, and says to the sergeant: 'Turn them in.' Having re-entered the guardroom, the soldiers place their rifles in the rack, and begin to assail the viands on the plates, each of the latter being rudely marked R. M. G.—Royal Mint Guard. We have used the expression 'rudely marked,' because guardroom delf is easily engraved upon with the assistance of a doorkey and a little water. Before much impression has been made on the ration beef by anybody except the drummer—who takes a keen interest in this part of his tour of duty—the officer steps two or three paces into the apartment, calling out: 'Any complaints?' The men, springing to their feet, and laying down knives and forks as though by word of command, with one accord cry: 'None, sir.' Thereupon the captain responds with the words: 'Aw; sit down;' he makes his exit, and is no more seen by the members of the Mint Guard.

The guardroom probably dates from the period when the rest of the Mint buildings were erected, and is a smaller apartment than would now be provided for the number of its occupants. But it is fitted with a large fireplace, in which a true 'soldiers' fire' can be kept blazing. At one extremity of the room, which is long and narrow, stands a small table for the exclusive convenience of the sergeant. Here he partakes of his meals in a species of solitary state; while close at hand is a portion of the guard-bed, which, on 'mounting,' he appropriates by spreading upon it his greatcoat. If a pay-sergeant, his batman (or servant) soon arrives, bearing the pay-book, an 'expense' ink-bottle, and other writing materials, contained in a case which once did duty as a knapsack of the pattern discarded some years ago. On the larger tables used by the private soldiers are to be seen a couple of copies of the *Standard*, together with an array of highly burnished knives and forks. And on the mantelshelf stands, not a timepiece, but a small box bearing the inscription, 'Salt.' Not far off is the 'Cook-house,' rather behind the day with regard to its appliances, and evidently built at a time when, to quote Mr Archibald Forbes, 'jam and marmalade were undreamt of' as constituents of army diet. Two cooks preside here. The senior man is responsible, and does most of the culinary work; the junior has the task of 'shining' the knives and of 'washing-up.'

In front of the guardroom door extends a large water-tank, reputed to be of great depth, and surrounded by a high iron railing. It probably exists for some purpose connected with the works in the Mint, and at anyrate provides a never-failing source of diversion for the men, and particularly for the drummer on guard, being inhabited by a colony of fish. A zest is given to the piscatorial proclivities of the boy by the exceeding shyness of the denizens of the tank; for, however eager to claim a morsel of bread thrown into the water, there is scarcely a case on record of their doing so when it was presented on the drummer's improvised fish-hook. It is

questionable, nevertheless, if there is anywhere to be found a better 'fished' piece of water of its size. The tank and its aborigines being well known in the vicinity, there is a tendency among the gamin class to emulate the love of sport as exemplified in the youthful drummer; for one side of the water is only separated from the esplanade by the aforementioned railing. The sentries, if immersed in their own reflections, sometimes wink at the presence of these would-be poachers. But this is seldom the case with the representative of the City police, who quickly drives them off. So the tank may be regarded as 'strictly preserved.'

Stretching almost quite around the Mint is a path—wide enough to be called a road—which is named the Military Way. This is patrolled day and night by sentries, whose task is monotonous, for, like the tank, the Military Way is 'preserved.' On one side of the path in its whole extent are the lofty buildings of the Mint; on the other is a high wall, similar to those round some of the metropolitan prisons. As the sentries here can see little but the road and walls from their posts, they naturally cast their glances chiefly towards the firmament. By night, this variety of astronomical observation is frequently enlivened by the movements of numerous cats, which perform daring gymnastic feats on the top of the wall, and whose extraordinary vocal exercises, if not exactly musical, are effectual aids to wakefulness. There are three sentinels at wide intervals apart in the Military Way; and they are cut off from the outer world not only by the walls, but by locked gates at either extremity of the path. Their 'orders' chiefly relate, of course, to the protection of the buildings. They are instructed to apprehend and confine in their sentry-boxes any unauthorised intruders. While there is no one to notice what they are about, the men are reminded to 'walk on their posts in a brisk and soldierlike manner'—a regulation pretty often disregarded 'on Mint.' As the gates at either end of the Way are locked, and the commandant only makes his visit once in two hours, the sentries have a good deal of latitude allowed them; and when looked in upon unexpectedly, their marching is not always found to be brisk, nor their attitudes soldier-like. In times of supposed danger, however, they are kept well on the alert, especially during the night. Each quarter of the hour they have to call out, beginning with number one, who cries, 'Number one, and all's well.' Then number two follows suit, and so on to number five.

As is customary on guard-duty, the men are divided into three 'reliefs.' When the relief next for sentry has fallen-in outside the guardhouse, the sergeant often takes measures to ascertain that the men actually have their ammunition; for the weight of the cartridges occasionally leads to attempts to conceal them within the valises, which are not worn on sentry. If any inexperienced soldiers are present, the commandant exhorts them to maintain a 'sharp lookout,' and directs the corporal to post these recruits in the positions of least responsibility. When night approaches—unless in midsummer—he issues the mandate, 'Coats on the guard!' And as the men put on their great-coats, one may be heard saying to another, 'Give me a pull round.' Two guardsmen are necessary to dispose a coat 'smartly.'

In the morning, the men off duty in the guard-room are roused at seven o'clock by the sergeant shouting for 'Two men for patrols;' and when the patrols return, he gives the order, 'Coats off the guard!' The soldiers now begin to arrange their equipments with a view to dismounting. While they are thus actively engaged, the cooks, as well as a canteen-man, arrive, the latter conveying in a basket such delicacies as butter cut into pennyworths, eggs, and 'rashers' of bacon. Soon afterwards comes the sergeant's mess waiter, bearing a pewter cylinder in shape somewhat resembling a silk hat of the conventional pattern. Internally, this vessel contains two compartments, one for tea or coffee, and the other for the solid constituents of the non-commissioned officer's breakfast.

When the morning meal has been discussed, the corporal, referring to his 'roster' of the guard, details two men to act as 'swabs,' who subject the floor of the room to a cleansing operation, in which buckets of water play so prominent a part that the place is rendered temporarily uninhabitable. The members of the guard therefore betake themselves to the outside of the building, where they watch the drummer while he takes a farewell 'cast.' About this time the sergeant often wears a very preoccupied appearance: he is thinking of his 'guard report'—a recapitulation of the doings of his 'command' which requires to be carefully put together. When completed, he intrusts the report to the boy, who fixes it in an ingenious manner amid the ropes of his side-drum.

Before long, the fanfaronade which accompanies the mounting of the Main Guard in the Tower is heard. After an interval, the sentry on the esplanade describes the 'new' Mint Guard approaching; and he intimates the circumstance to his comrades by shouting, 'Guard, turn out!' The 'old' guard is soon relieved, the men stepping out with alacrity on their homeward journey. When they have arrived under the shadow of the White Tower, the drummer extricates the report from the grasp of the ropes and hands it to the sergeant. That functionary seeing the adjutant at a little distance gesticulating before a squad of recruits, proceeds to inform him of the arrival of the Mint Guard. But the officer, observing his approach, calls out, 'Dismiss your guard.' As the men struggle off to their quarters, they may be heard remarking that they have 'done one more Mint for the Queen.'

UNEXPECTED ANSWERS.

NOTHING takes a questioner so much aback as an entirely unexpected reply, especially if, as is generally the case, there be some degree of truth in it. He must have all his wits about him to answer offhand; but in nine cases out of ten he is unable to do so. No class of men seem to be so liable in this respect as school inspectors. It might be concluded that constant experience would teach them to be ready for such answers, and to profit by them; but whether this is so, is not chronicled. We think not.

In a Sixth Standard examination, a vacuum was described as 'an empty space without anything in it;' and a compass, according to another genius, was 'a tripod with a round or circular box surmounting it, which always points due north.'

This reminds us of the very sensible answer returned by a candidate in a Civil Service examination to the question, 'How far is the sun from the earth?' but which, we fear, did not increase his chances of passing. 'I don't know,' he wrote; 'but it's so far, that it will never interfere with my performing my duties if I am appointed.'

The girls are not a whit behind, or before, the boys in these malapropos answers. For example, when a little girl was asked the reason why the Israelites made a golden calf, she replied: 'Cause they hadna as muckle siller as would mak' a coo.' Another Scotch girl, at an examination, gave a pretty definition when asked, 'What does patience mean?'—'Wait a wee an' dinna weary.' During a School Board examination in the west of Scotland, the examiner asked a little girl, 'What is meant by, He was amply rewarded?'—'Paid for't.'—'No, no. You are quite wrong. Suppose you were to go into a baker's shop and buy a half-quarter loaf, and lay down fourpence, would you say you had amply rewarded the baker?' Unhesitatingly the girl replied in the affirmative. 'Why?'—'Because the loaf's only twopence-three-farthings,' was the unlooked-for answer. The inspector let that girl off easily during the remainder of the lesson.

A little fellow was sent a message by his mother to a lady. When he had delivered it, he did not seem in a hurry to go; and the lady, noticing this, asked him if there was anything else his mother had bidden him say. She was not prepared for his reply: 'She said I wasna to seek onything for coming, but if ye gave me onything, I was to tak' it.'

Sunday-school stories are sometimes equal to others in their irresistible fun. Sacred things have an influence over the mind of youth; but occasionally, as in the two following anecdotes, the influence or temptation is too strong for the mischief-loving boys, and eventually overcomes their religious feelings for the time. A Sunday-school teacher asked her scholars to learn an appropriate text to say as they gave in their pennies to the next collection. The first was, 'He that giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord'; and all were right until it came to the last boy, who, reluctantly dropping his penny into the box, said, to the great amazement of teachers and scholars, 'The fool and his money are soon parted!'

As an example of the error of talking figuratively to those who do not appreciate, and who are apt to take everything literally, this story is worth reading. The respected superintendent of a Sunday school had told his boys that they should endeavour to bring their neighbours to the school, saying that they should be like a train—the scholar being the engine, and his converts the carriages. Judge of his surprise when, next Sunday, the door opened during lessons, and a little boy, making a noise like an engine, ran in, followed by half-a-dozen others in single file at his back! He came to a halt before the superintendent, who asked the meaning of it all. The naive answer was: 'Please, sir, I'm the engine, and them's the carriages.'

From America come the following, which no doubt are as authentic as such stories usually are. A teacher in Virginia, during a geography

lesson, asked a boy the name of the State he lived in. He was pretty right when he replied: 'A state of sin and misery.' Somewhat astonished was another when he heard, in answer to the question, 'Who killed Abel?' that it was General Jackson. It must have been one of these boys who, when asked, 'In what state was mankind after the fall?' answered: 'In the State of Vermont.'

A father said: 'Bill, if you had your due, you'd get a good whipping.'—'I know, daddy; but bills are not always paid when due.' Equally clever was a boy hearing of the wonders of astronomy. 'Men have learned the distances of the stars,' his father said; 'and, with their spectroscopes, found out what they are made of.'—'Yes,' was the reply; 'and isn't it strange, pa, how they found out their names also!'

Leaving juvenile answers, and turning to those of grown-up persons, we find that they are naturally more clever and sharp. Perhaps the best is that told at the expense of the Irish Chief-justice Caulfield, who was very greedy. Only on one occasion did he have a dinner-party, and among the guests was the rector of the parish. This gentleman, being asked to return thanks at the conclusion of the dinner, referred in the following manner to the well-known parsimony of the host:

We thank the Lord, for this is nothing less
Than the fall of manna in the wilderness;
In the house of famine we have found relief,
And known the comforts of a round of beef;
Chimneys have smoked that never smoked before,
And we have dined where we shall dine no more.

The Chief-justice stifled his feelings, and laughed with the rest; but he thought he had his revenge in asking the clergyman to dinner on a subsequent day. He came; but, when the covers were taken off, the dishes were empty! Caulfield maliciously asked the rector to say grace; and he, dumbfounded only for a moment, rose and said:

May He who blessed the loaves and fishes
Look down upon these empty dishes;
For if they do our stomachs fill,
'Twill surely be a miracle.

Another legal luminary was as severely dealt with at the hands of a young lady noted for her sharp wit. The judge, whose personal appearance was as unprepossessing as his intellect was keen and his judgment fair, asked this female what she meant by the term 'humbugged.'—'Well, my lord,' replied the lady, angry at the interruption, 'I hardly know how to explain it; but if a young lady called your lordship a handsome man, she would be humbugging you.'

Even sharper was the epigrammatic reply of a young lady to an old admirer, who, having found her glove, returned it to her with the following distich:

If from your glove you take the letter G,
Your glove is love, which I devote to thee.

The old gentleman's name was Page; and he received the following unexpected answer, which chagrined him so much that he left the place:

If from your Page you take the letter P,
Your Page is age, and that won't do for me.

An old cavalier was asked, when Cromwell

coined his first money, what he thought of it. On one side was the inscription, 'God with us;' and on the other, 'The Commonwealth of England.' 'I see,' he said, 'that God and the Commonwealth are on different sides.'

Two candidates, named Adam and Low, had to preach probation sermons for a lectureship in the gift of a certain congregation. Mr Low preached in the morning, taking for his text the words, 'Adam, where art thou?' and giving an excellent sermon. Mr Adam took for his text, to the surprise of the congregation and his rival, the passage, 'Lo, here am I.' From this he preached such a splendid impromptu sermon that he gained the lectureship.

To conclude, we give the story of an amateur artist who had decided to send the productions of a quarter of a century to some charitable institution for the benefit of the inmates. Before doing so, however, he invited an old, plain-spoken Scotch artist to see his works, informing him at the same time of his philanthropic intention, and asking his advice as to the institution on which he should confer so much honour. 'Well,' was the grim reply, 'if ye will compliment them, the best place I ken o' is the Blind Asylum.'

OCCASIONAL NOTES.

LIME-JUICE FROM TRINIDAD.

ALTHOUGH the lime-tree is a wild shrub in Trinidad, it is only within the past three years that any attempt has been made to turn its fruit to commercial advantage. At that time, the American consul recommended the shipping of a few barrels of the fruit to America as an experiment; but the fruit decayed in transit, and the attempt was a failure. Another plan was resorted to—the neutralisation of the acid juice with chalk; but this plan also has had to be abandoned; and the expressed juice itself is now exported, either in the simple state as obtained by pressure, or after evaporation to about one-tenth its volume. The simple juice finds a market in America, and the condensed juice in England. There are even now only two farmers who cultivate the lime for exportation, and one of these has supplied the American consul with much useful information.

Lime-trees grow and bear in any soil, but the better the soil the larger the fruit. They are planted from twelve to sixteen feet apart, and when young, are pruned and trained to the shape of an umbrella. When about to form a lime plantation, it is best to form a nursery a year beforehand, and then transplant the young trees, pulling them up from the soil, cutting off the end of the pivot root, and then placing them in the ground where they are to grow. A lime-tree yields on an average ten gallons of juice. The fruit is allowed to drop off, and is then collected and conveyed to the works, where the limes are passed first through the cutter, which rips them open, and then through rollers and the press to separate the juice. These cutters, rollers, and press are constructed in a very simple and primitive way, and admit of very great improvement. The juice is then exported, either in this condition, or it is condensed by boiling. So far as the cost of lime-juice is concerned, it

is said that a barrel of limes (worth eightpence) will give seven gallons of juice. Including packages, the entire cost of the juice is about sixpence per gallon; and as it is sold at prices ranging from one shilling and sixpence to two shillings and sixpence per gallon, the cultivation is profitable. The essential oil of limes is extracted from the rind before the fruit is crushed by grating on rasps with the hands. The oil thus extracted is called the hand-made oil, and is superior to that obtained from the crushed limes and by distillation. A hundred gallons of juice will yield by distillation about three quarts of the essential oil. It is believed that this branch of industry is capable of great expansion, and that, with capital and intelligence, it might become a leading and important manufacture on the island, the soil being so suitable for the growth of the fruit.

WHY DOES PAPER TURN YELLOW?

Professor Wiesner, a well-known German savant, has been making a series of very interesting and useful experiments on this subject, with the result that he now contends that the yellowing of paper is due to an oxidation determined by light, and especially by the more refrangible rays. This discoloration is more striking in wood-papers than in rag-papers. He also found that dry air is another most important condition for the preservation of paper. One of his conclusions is very interesting, this being, that in libraries, the electric light is inferior to gas, on account of the large proportion of the more refrangible rays present in the former. This is an important matter, and one that deserves further inquiry.

THE END OF THE STORY.

You were standing alone in the silence,
When I passed down the stair that night,
Alone with your thoughts in the shadow,
Away from the fire's soft light,
And never a greeting you gave me,
Not a word your lips let fall,
As I came from the light to your side, dear,
That night, in the old oak hall!

But I knew, ah, so well, the secret
You fancied you kept unseen,
And I hated the pride that was standing
Like a shadow our hearts between.
So I told you, that night, a story,
And you listened as in a spell,
Till I saw that you guessed the meaning
Of the story I tried to tell!

You fain would have silenced me then, dear;
To leave it untold were best—
Too late, for I learned, as you drew me
To your heart, that you knew the rest!
And the shadow passed by from between us,
For ever, beyond recall,
As you whispered the end of the story
That night, in the old oak hall!

G. CLIFTON BINGHAM.

Printed and Published by W. & R. CHAMBERS, 47 Paternoster Row, LONDON, and 339 High Street, EDINBURGH.